



My name is Fred Stula and I am the Director of Government Advocacy & Community Affairs for HARC, Inc. I am submitting testimony on behalf of HARC for the Public Health Committee Public Hearing on Monday, February 23, 2015. If there are questions regarding my testimony please contact me at 860-218-6089 or fstula@harc-ct.org.

HARC is a community-based nonprofit organization in Hartford funded through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). It was founded in 1951 and with a staff of 356, helps over 2,200 individuals with intellectual disability and their families. HARC is a major provider of clinical and supportive programs that span the entire lifetime: early intervention (Birth-to-Three), family support, respite care, employment and day services, residential, recreation, behavioral health and elderly services. HARC is part of the Safety Net and a partner with the State of Connecticut in providing cost-effective services to individuals with intellectual disability and their families.

Raised Bill No. 918 would require the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to create a plan and provide services to individuals with intellectual disability who are eligible and in need of services, including individuals on the waiting list by July 1, 2017. The services include; community based residential placements, respite care, emergency care, day programs, vocational services and in-home supports. The bill will also require DDS to identify the additional staff, facilities and cost required to provide the services.

The goal of providing services to all of Connecticut's eligible citizens with intellectual disability is widely accepted but there is no plan or funding methodology to achieve it. This bill would require DDS to evaluate how it annually spends \$1.2 billion, address the closure of Southbury Training School and evaluate if the State should continue to be a direct care provider when it's been proven that private community providers provide better service in the community for a third of the cost.

The DDS budget has been cut by more than \$43 million since November 2012. Every budget, mitigation plan and ordered rescission since then has continued to reduce funds for community providers who support individuals with intellectual disability and their families. These cuts have continued in the context of 30 years of chronic underfunding for the same community providers supported by DDS to care for our most vulnerable citizens. The cuts and underfunding is a direct result of our state not having a plan to address the needs of individuals with intellectual disability.

The plan outlined in this bill will prioritize individuals with intellectual disability and provide a clear strategic public and private partnership solution that will help; eligible individuals with intellectual disability get the services they need, provide relief to their families, increase wages for direct care staff and funding for private community providers while still saving the state money. HARC urges the committee to pass the bill and give families the certainty they need in planning their own futures for their loved ones with disabilities.